

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 EA-09 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

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FM AMEMBASSY COLOMBO
TO RUEHCBSECSTATE WASHDC 5892
INFO AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
USLO PEKING
AMCONSUL HONG KONG

UNCLAS COLOMBO 3656

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: EAID,PFOR, CE, CH
SUBJECT: CHINESE BEGIN GIN GANGA FLOOD PROTECTION PROJECT

REF: COLOMBO 3589

1. IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THE EXTENDED PERIOD OF MOURNING FOR MAO TSE TUNG (REFTEL), PRIME MINISTER BANDARANAIKE INAUGURATED THE GIN GANGA FLOOD PROTECTION PROJECT ON SEPTEMBER 21. THE TOTAL COST OF THE PROJECT, INCLUDING LOCAL EXPENSES, IS BEING FINANCED BY A RS. 210 MILLION INTEREST-FREE LOAN FROM THE PRC WHICH IS REPAYABLE IN 30 YEARS WITH A 10 YEAR GRACE PERIOD. THE PRC WILL ALSO PROVIDE 30 PUMPS, ALL THE NECESSARY CONSTRUCTION EQUIPMENT, AND 200 TECHNICIANS TO SUPERVISE THE BUILDING OF 38 DIKES AT VARIOUS POINTS ALONG A 14-MILE STRETCH OF THE RIVER.

2. THE GIN GANGA FLOWS FROM AN ELEVATION OF 3,000 FEET ABOVE SEA LEVEL IN SOUTHERN SRI LANKA DOWN TO A FLOOD PLAIN NORTHWEST OF GALLE ON THE SOUTHEASTERN COAST OF THE ISLAND. ON AN AVERAGE OF VERY FIVE YEARS
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THE RIVER OVERFLOWS ITS BANKS AND INUNDATES AN AREA OF OVER 12,000 ACRES, AFFECTING SOME 6000 HOMES AND 30,000

PEOPLE. THE PLANNED DIKE SYSTEM WILL SUPPLEMENT EXISTING NATURAL BARRIERS AND IS INTENDED TO CONTAIN THE RIVER DURING THESE PERIODIC FLOODS. THE PUMPS WILL BE INSTALLED TO DRAIN THE FLOODPLAIN DURING PERIODS OF HEAVY RAIN BY PUMPING WATER FROM THE FIELDS INTO THE RIVER. DURING PERIODS OF DROUGHT, THE PUMPS WILL BE REVERSED TO PROVIDE IRRIGATION. ALTHOUGH THIS IS

PRIMARILY A FLOOD CONTROL PROJECT, WHICH SHOULD ALLOW THE AREA TO PRODUCE THREE CROPS PER YEAR INSTEAD OF THE PRESENT ONE CROP, AN ADDITIONAL 700 ACRES OF PADDY ARE TO BE BROUGHT UNDER CULTIVATION. THE PROJECT IS EXPECTED TO TAKE THREE YEARS TO COMPLETE.

3. AT THE OPENING CEREMONY, WHICH WAS ATTENDED BY PRC AMBASSADOR HUANG MING-TA, THE PRIME MINISTER SAID 5,000 LOCAL YOUTHS WOULD BE EMPLOYED IN BUILDING THE DIKES. AFTER COMMENTING ON THE HARD WORK AND DEDICATION SHOWN BY THE CHINESE WORKERS WHO BUILT THE BANDARANAIKE MEMORIAL INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE HALL IN 1973, SHE CALLED ON THOSE SRI LANKANS WHO WILL BE WORKING ON THE GIN GANGA PROJECT TO FOLLOW THE CHINESE EXAMPLE AND LEARN FROM THE EXPERIENCE. SHE ALSO SAID THE PRC WOULD LATER BE UNDERTAKING ANOTHER PROJECT TO DIVERT THE NILWALA GANGA (WHICH LIES ROUGHLY 15 MILES EAST OF THE GIN GANGA) TO IRRIGATE THE HAMBANTOTA AREA.

4. INAUGURATION REINFORCES THE SRI LANKAN PERCEPTION THAT THE CHINESE ARE A MAJOR SRI LANKA BENEFACTOR, AND THAT IN SINO-SOVIET COMPETITION TO GAIN INFLUENCE THROUGH ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE, CHINESE COME OUT A LONG WAY AHEAD.
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